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CONTEXTUALIZING DIVERSITY'S (NON-)PERFORMATIVITY[1]

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Abstract

The article contextualizes the traveled skeptical evaluation of
diversity as a 'non-performative' (Ahmed) in German Gender
Studies and Diversity Studies debates. The text analyses and
highlights performative effects of a 'narrative of overcoming'
according to which a multidimensional and non-hierarchic
notion of diversity supersedes and replaces the critical concepts
of gender and difference.

Introduction

Diversity, though deemed a concept that aims for social justice,
has been called out for its lack of critical potential. Sara Ahmed
has prominently shown how declaring a commitment to
diversity as an institutional speech act is a "non-performative"
(Ahmed, 2012, p.116): it is a speech act that does not 'do as it
says'. Thus, "the names come to stand in for the effects"
(Ahmed, 2012, p.117). Similarly, Angela Davis states in her
inaugural lecture at the Cornelia Goethe Center for Women's
and Gender Studies in Frankfurt, Germany, in December 2013

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[1] I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for engaging with this
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that diversity in United States corporate as well as higher education contexts has come to stand for "a difference that makes no difference" (Davis, 2013). There seems to be a difference between what diversity is meant to mean, is meant to bring about, and what it actually brings about or has come to mean.

The skeptical evaluations of the (lack of) effects of diversity as a term for social justice that is fighting racialized discrimination and exclusion have traveled across geo-political contexts. While they certainly resonate with many other contexts, they are nevertheless also context-specific: Sara Ahmed's analysis outlines the critical potential of Whiteness Studies and antiracist commitment with regard to statements, academic literature, and actions in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Ahmed, 2004). Her further elaborations on 'saying diversity' as a non-performative speech act are based on research in the field of institutional diversity work in higher education in the UK and Australia (Ahmed, 2012). Angela Davis' statement in her lecture referred to equality politics in the USA. While these contexts have come to be of global relevance more so than many others, they nonetheless show specificity; the knowledges produced with regard to these contexts emerge together with the specific geo-political, social, institutional, and epistemological environments with which they engage; they come from somewhere, they "have a country" (Rich, 1985, p. 8).

This is not to say that they are irrelevant for other contexts. But when aiming for "politics of location" (Rich, 1985, p. 11) the specificities of the context of emergence and of travel need to be given some thought. For the German context it is necessary to reflect on the implications of a traveled concept or theory (Bal, 2002; Said, 1983) of diversity, which is often introduced as an English word into a German-speaking setting. Furthermore, the applicability of a traveled critique of this concept, e.g. as a non-performative and a difference that makes

no difference needs to be considered. Additionally, both the affirmative reception of diversity terminology and its critical debating in Germany are seeping into other fields than that of equality politics and a more equal Human Resource Management. So, the travels of diversity also cross the boundaries of disciplines and fields of application. [2] The challenges faced by critics engaging with the concept of diversity in the German context are twofold: firstly, it is necessary to evaluate for the context of diversity politics and measures that intend to increase equality in which ways diversity may have brought the tendency not to 'say as it does' along with it and to point out where and when it is used as mere lip-service also in Germany. Secondly, it is necessary to focus on the specific effects that the introduction of the term diversity into a German setting brings about beyond not saying as it does, and to focus on the performativity of 'saying diversity' also beyond the context of equality politics. This contribution focuses on the latter task – which by no means implies that the former is not just as urgent.

Insisting that shifts in meaning brought about by the language of diversity do make differences, this paper examines in what way the practices of 'saying diversity' are involved in constituting a specific field of knowledge about diversity. The notion of performativity used here is leaning towards Judith Butler's and Michel Foucault's reading of discursive practice as proliferative. Butler's notion of performativity as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effect that it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 2) and Foucault's statement that discursive practices "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) share that discourse produces, discourse forms what can be said and thought, and it is contradictory and proliferating. That is to say,

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[2] For an overview of the many meanings of a concept of diversity beyond the management of diversity in social sciences, cultural studies, and educational sciences, see e.g. Salzbrunn, 2014 and Walgenbach, 2014.

the "effect that it names" and "the objects of which they speak" are not fixed but constantly on the move.[3]

My contribution focuses on the performative effects of academic storytelling practices (Haraway, 1989) with regard to diversity terminology in texts leaning towards diversity. I thus read narrative as one particular form of engagement in the formation of a discourse. In the stories told, statements about diversity's closeness or distance to concepts of gender on the one hand, and concepts of difference on the other will be highlighted. The latter two concepts seem to be chosen in order to negotiate the meaning of diversity, both in continuity with the field of Gender Studies, and also as markers of the differentiation of diversity from Gender Studies concepts. [4] These stories are seen as productive with regard to constituting and shaping a field of knowledge; they render certain knowledges acceptable and convincing and others problematic and limited.

After addressing the context of the discussion of diversity terminology in Germany, two central related story-lines will be highlighted below: first, a narrative of overcoming that has diversity emerging as the more 'up to date' term that replaces 'older' feminist terms and Gender Studies knowledge; second, an assertion of an all-encompassing non-hierarchic concept of diversity that supersedes a binary logic of difference. These stories point at the problem of scholarly knowledge-making through overcoming and replacement, that is by way of casting away the old in order to install the new.

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[3] This specific version of performativity 'wants' something else than the notion of (non-)performativity enacted in Ahmed's engagement (Ahmed, 2004, p.50; Ahmed, 2012, pp.116ff.). Highlighting a contradictory discourse on diversity rather than evaluating the effects of the language of diversity in concrete equality politics necessitates another notion of performativity.

[4] In "Against Proper Objects. Introduction" (Butler, 1994) Judith Butler shows how the new field of Lesbian and Gay Studies is similarly defined by way of focusing on certain concepts (sexuality, gender), which guarantee both continuity with Women's Studies, and difference from Women's Studies (Butler, 1994, p.2f.)

Furthermore, they allow problematizing the specific knowledge that the examined diversity discourse constitutes.

Diversity Stories at Work

After the explicit appearance of the term diversity in Germany, a lot of output from the emerging field of Diversity Studies has been almost naïvely affirmative, more or less denying or downplaying all possible problematic effects of diversity terminology or diversity measurements while highlighting the potentials both for research and for increasing equal opportunity (especially Krell et al., 2007). Though claiming a strong tie between diversity and antidiscrimination work, the most visible contributions came from the field of Human Resource Management and they show a striking absence of references to earlier German feminist, queer, and antiracist activism and scholarly work, and particularly to contributions from People of Color and Black or Afro-German authors.[5] At the other end of the spectrum, the concept of diversity, or a "diversity dispositif" (Knapp, 2005), has been quickly rejected by Gender Studies and feminist scholars based on its supposed profit-orientation, its reification of differences, and its neoliberal individualization of inequality (e.g. Knapp, 2005; Wetterer, 2002). Human Resource Management was not deemed a 'proper origin' for critical feminist thinking, and contributions from this field were received with suspicion

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[5] The term People of Color is increasingly being used among activists and critical scholars in Germany as a political self-description for people who are subjected to racialization and exclusion by a dominant structure of *whiteness* in multiple different, at times contradictory ways (e.g. Ha, 2013). Identifications as Black German or Afro-German (Schwarze Deutsche or Afro-Deutsche, see e.g. Oguntoye, Opitz & Schultz, 1992) undermine the hegemonic racist imagination of German-ness as essentially *white* and as an identity that presumably cannot be acquired but has to be achieved by descent. 'Black' will be capitalized in order to highlight that it is meant to address a political self-identification rather than a biological categorization. For the role of Black women's and lesbian's activism for the Black movement in Germany, see e.g. Eggers 2010. For a collection of German contributions to Critical Whiteness Studies, see e.g. Eggers, Kilomba, Piesche & Arndt 2005.

(Putschert, 2007). The increasing popularity of diversity terminology was noted with worries about its future place in the academe that threatened to render Gender Studies and gender equality measurements obsolete, when this wide new umbrella term called diversity could, perhaps, house questions of gender alongside all other categorizations of difference. Against this competitive background, it seems that there was not much space left for a critical curiosity about the contradictory effects of diversity discourse in Germany.

Though the concept of diversity has increasingly been discussed (both in a problematizing as well as a partially affirmative manner) in connection with queer-feminist Gender Studies, intersectionality, postcoloniality and decolonization (e.g. Smykalla & Vinz, 2011; Dhawan & Castro Varela, 2011; Engel, 2013), the tensions in the relation between gender and diversity are still far from resolved. The debates are characterized by contradiction and conflicts among activists and scholars; conflicts about who gets to define the scope of Gender Studies, who gets to represent a field, who is structurally excluded by institutional *whiteness*[6] in teaching and hiring practices, whose visibility is erased in publications etc.

In the context of German academic research, both the concept of intersectionality and of diversity threaten to become a buzzing thing that *white* scholars can discuss to reform their teaching and researching agenda, without these engagements necessarily showing any effects in terms of changing the distribution of power in the academe (Gutiérrez-Rodríguéz, 2011). It has been noted with regard to intersectionality that German scholars may erase Black feminist work in their contributions; they manage to write about intersectionality without ever mentioning the work of Black feminist scholars, or suggest versions of intersectionality without mentioning racism or structural *whiteness* (Bilge, 2013; Chebout, 2011).

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[6] I put *whiteness* in italics to mark the term as referring to a structural distribution of power.

The dominance of *white* German voices from the field of Human Resource Management in what claims to be Diversity Studies mirrors this phenomenon. The texts I am critically discussing in this paper in turn mirror and repeat this claim for dominance – an unfortunate effect of exposing the ways in which they work.

In the face of the complicated context that I can only hint at here, it is necessary to consider that it is not so clear what is actually being said and what may be promised in the German context, when 'diversity' is being said. Whereas in the US and UK contexts, it seems that 'diversity' cannot really be said without thinking 'antiracism,' in Germany it happens quite frequently that examples for successful diversity work are given that do not address racialized discrimination and exclusion at all. In Germany, then, it is quite possible to 'say diversity,' without ever mentioning 'race'. Thus 'saying diversity' can even erase the struggles against racialized discrimination and systematic exclusion of racialized 'others,' rather than strengthen them (see also Thompson & Zablotzky in this volume). Analyzing what it is that is said or done when 'saying diversity' is a necessary component of any evaluation of diversity's effects.

In this vein, the following two sections show in what way stories told in academic texts are involved in rendering a specific reading of diversity plausible and self-evident. The given readings de-familiarize the acceptability of the offered positions and allow thinking about diversity stories as performative, as constituting diversity as a specific field of knowledge, and as claiming disciplinary and conceptual space in a particular way. Thinking about these claims *as claims* will allow for the contestation of their legitimacy.

The readings below are based on detailed text analyses undertaken during my PhD-research on the emerging discourse on diversity in Germany (Marten, 2014; Marten, forthcoming). Against the backdrop of a Foucaultian notion of critique and

genealogy (Foucault, 1997, 1984), text examples are analyzed with regard to the role of narrative (Bal, 2009; White, 1981) in negotiating the critical potential of diversity terminology and the relationship between diversity and gender, and diversity and difference. The persuasiveness of the matter-of-fact stories is thus put into question and their effects can be better problematized. The text examples (Krell, 2009; Krell et al., 2007; Sieben & Bornheim, 2011; Smykalla & Vinz, 2011; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010) affirmatively express support for diversity terminology and for Diversity Studies as a promising new disciplinary space.[7] The relationship between diversity, gender, and difference is negotiated by way of identifying (either shared or divergent) historical *origins*[8] and trajectories for the respective concepts.[9]

Diversity as the Modernizer of Gender

The text examples propagate the institutionalization of Diversity Studies, and/or a concept of diversity as a central category for analysis. Distance and proximity between gender

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[7] In this paper, I am focusing on only 'one side of the story'. The particular depiction of the relation between diversity and gender given in the here discussed examples was strongly rejected, especially from the perspective of feminist theory, see e.g. Knapp, 2005; Purtschert, 2007; Wetterer, 2002. In my dissertation, the ways in which diversity is critically debated are foregrounded (Marten 2014; Marten, forthcoming). In this contribution, the things that are possibly 'done' when 'saying diversity' affirmatively were of higher concern.

[8] The word *origin* is put in italics to highlight that it is the very notion of an origin, of un-equivocally identifiable origins for present concepts or phenomena, and the assumption of their subsequent continuous progressive movement through time, that is put into question in a Foucaultian perspective of genealogy that follows Nietzsche's notions of descent and emergence (Foucault, 1984, pp.80ff.).

[9] The texts are utilized as cases with which I can illustrate a problem to think with. As cases, they relate to the discursive fields in which they are written and read, but they do not represent a field, nor is it my intention to prove to what degree they may stand for a dominant perspective, nor have I collected quantitative data on whether they represent a character of debate that is specific to the time-span of publication.

and diversity[10] are negotiated by way of a contradictory play between continuity and discontinuity. Nevertheless, recurring story-lines can be highlighted. I use 'story-line' where Mieke Bal uses "fabula" as "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused and experienced by actors." (Bal, 2009, p. 5) The analysis below does not aim to speculate about possible intentions of authors, but focuses on processes of stabilization and producing acceptability of fact-like knowledge by way of narrative passages, which work towards the plausibilization of (located, particular) perspectives as common sense (White, 1981, pp. 3).

In the text examples diversity and gender are portrayed on the level of description as belonging to a shared conceptual space and as sharing similar interests. A "functional marriage" (Krell, 2009, p. 33) is suggested between diversity and gender, because both approaches are seen to share interests and concepts, while they only differ with regard to the concrete measures. Metaphors of a mutual opening of doors or of offering tailwind for one another are used to describe the character of the relationship between diversity and gender (Krell et al., 2007, p.12; Krell, 2009, p. 141; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 32). According to Bal, metaphors and substantives can be read as mini-narratives (Bal, 2009, pp. 35, pp. 158). The mentioned metaphors tell stories about potentially helping one another into a space that is otherwise locked, about helping each other across a threshold, assuming a

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[10] The exact meanings of the terms diversity and gender remain blurry in the text examples: they can refer to concepts and categories of knowledge, to analytical categories for sociological research, and to strategies and measurements for the increase of equal opportunity or the reduction of discrimination and inequality. I will not resolve this lack of precision, because it does not, or at least not only, lead to a miscommunication, but seems rather productive with regard to the emergence of a convincing story about, and a discursive field around the concept of diversity.

realm of shared precariousness and marginality on the same side of the threshold.

A common historically grown commitment to antidiscrimination is mentioned as the ground for similar interests (Sieben & Bornheim, 2011, p. 96; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 26). Diversity is here often introduced as a direct offspring of the US civil rights movement and as the continuation of affirmative action measures (Sieben & Bornheim, 2011, p. 96; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 26). Critical viewpoints about the introduction of diversity terminology in the US context (e.g. Edelman et al., 2001) are being omitted in these statements about the supposed *origin* of diversity in the struggles against discrimination. Contradictions are thus erased in the narrative assertion of a shared interest between gender and diversity.

Finally, diversity is brought into conceptual contact with the proliferation and multiplication of the scope of gender in queer-feminist Women's and Gender Studies, and also with the reflections on interlocking systems of oppression and a multiplication of axes of difference that are considered relevant in intersectional approaches (Krell et al., 2007, pp. 8, pp. 12; Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 20). This closeness is generally merely asserted and claimed as the background for another argument, rather than elaborated on, or argued for itself. It thus emerges as an accepted fact, not as a contestable reading.

These declarations of commonality between diversity and gender will now be contrasted with a narrative about the overcoming and replacement of the *old* (gender) by the *new* (diversity). In an introductory text on gender and diversity Vinz and Schiederig (2010) give a short historical narration. This narration deals with the "struggle for women's rights" (p. 19) at the beginning of a subchapter on gender in the style of giving relevant background knowledge and facts. This style of giving the 'background facts' is achieved by way of giving information without discernible perspective of a narrator, by

referring to 'history' as a frame of reference, and by leaving out explanations on the methods with which the given knowledge was produced (Bal, 2009, pp.26, White, 1981, pp. 3; see also Haraway's "god trick" (Haraway, 1988, p. 582). The following account of the struggle for women's rights is given:

> Already in the 18th century the first women's movement formed, which demanded the introduction of the right to vote also for women. [...] In the late 1960s the second women's movement began. The third women's movement formed in the 1990s. (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, pp.19; my translation)

This embedded historical retroversion into the past of gender can be read as the background against which the primary story about gender and diversity takes place in the text (Bal, 2009, pp. 58, p. 82). The women's movement and the question of gender are presented as historical matters, as things that have passed, that are of the past. The movements of the past and their concepts seem to only prepare the subsequent passages on diversity in the text. The style of historically correct reporting allows little doubt about that which is reported on. A contradictory field is here being portrayed as an orderly series of clearly identifiable waves or phases that the women's movements stand for. Even though this particular way of narrating identity and continuity is very common, presenting the series of phases of the German women's movements as a linear progression nonetheless covers over and obscures the multiplicity of the debates that took place in any one of these phases.

The passage about the women's movements is positioned in an introductory subchapter on the concept of gender before the primary story arrives at the central subchapters on the concept of diversity. The section on diversity begins with the sentence: "The concept of diversity encompasses additional dimensions of difference besides gender" (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 26; my translation).

Diversity is here posited as conceptually broader than gender, as encompassing more differences. Diversity then seems to be *more* than gender can be. This notion of gender as "only gender" and diversity as multidimensional is prepared in the fragment about the women's movements and given the appearance of facticity. This is accomplished by way of a narrative strategy, which Clare Hemmings called "glossing" (Hemmings, 2011, p. 39). The brief passage on the women's movements reduces the multiplicity and the contradictions in the (many, not always harmoniously united) women's movements by way of condensing long periods of time into tell-able phases of one-and-the-same movement. These phases in turn are assigned an identity – in this case, unsurprisingly, there are three phases of women's movements, which are assigned one central problem or concept each. The text proceeds:

> With the three waves of the women's movement three different theoretical approaches are connected. Whereas the first wave focused on equal rights for women, the second wave supported a "difference feminism," which assumed differences between women and men and demanded the advancement of women. [...] The feminist Women's Studies were criticized for generalizing the experience of white middle class women and for neglecting the differences among the group of women (class, ethnicity, age). The third wave tries to do justice to this critique and by and large supports a deconstructive approach, which regards gender as a social construction and accordingly demands a consideration of gender-specific problems in all measures. (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 20; my translation)

Three waves are described following three different angles: equality, difference, deconstruction (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, pp. 19). It is noteworthy that in the third wave the demands for recognition of differences among women (here: class, ethnicity,

age) that should be considered in feminist Women's Studies merges with deconstruction. Conflicts between the mentioned demands for recognition and the practice of deconstruction are made invisible. The critics who demand the consideration of other grammars of difference remain implicit in the passive voice; they do not appear as subjects, and their criticism is merely the motor for a reformed third wave of feminism; their criticism is narratively eaten up by an ever-evolving chain of women's movements. Clare Hemmings describes similarly how Black feminist work has been integrated and reduced to merely a catalyzing phase that improves Western post-structuralist feminism in Western feminist texts (Hemmings, 2011, pp. 40). The quoted passage additionally does not differentiate between deconstruction and social construction. Despite ample lack of clarity, the absence of the narrative perspective from which these statements are made has them appear as historical facts that seemingly speak for themselves (White, 1981, p. 3).

The narration of a chronological sequence of identifiable phases of the development of the women's movement is connected with a logic of causality: The phases of the women's movement are explained as resulting from their historical circumstances, their contexts, which led to a specific focus in the respective waves. The historical contexts, that is to say 'the facts,' seem to demand these particular developments of movements and their concepts. It is the critique of the second wave that is the motor of change, which led to the specific formation of the third wave. The replacement of an older phase by a new phase is thus portrayed as necessary and coherent.

The embedded story about history connects with the primary argument of the text. The description of the third wave of the women's movement draws on the criticism of white and middle class positions and the resulting multiplication of grammars of difference in the concept of gender, as was and is discussed in connection with the notion of intersectionality or interdependency elsewhere (e.g. Walgenbach, 2012). In the text example this potential complexity is depicted as resulting in

a deconstructive approach, which regards gender as a social construction and accordingly demands a consideration of gender-specific problems in all measures. (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 20; my translation)

The concept of gender appears as "a social construction" by way of the "glossing" of the third phase that simplifies the above-mentioned ongoing complicated debates within Gender Studies about the interdependent character of categorizations of difference. This narrow concept of gender, then, in fact encompasses less than the concept of diversity, which is characterized as multidimensional in the text. The evaluation of the concepts' usefulness with regard to a characterization of the current society as multiple and diverse anticipates the overcoming of (this particular notion of) gender already in the catchy opening phrase of the text-example: "Diversity is growing in our society" (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 13). Diversity is suggested as the tool with which the complexity of current increasingly heterogeneous societies can be better analyzed, while gender seems to only capture one of the many relevant differences. In sum, parallel to the asserted common grounds between gender and diversity the text tells a story about the necessary overcoming and replacement of a dated concept of gender by the more up to date concept of diversity. This narrative of overcoming rests on a linear-chronological and causal image of time and progress. This notion of time and/as progress in turn operates through reductive identification of unequivocal generations of concepts.

The Narrative Disappearance of Hierarchies

The distinctions between diversity and gender in the diversity texts at hand connect with a narration on diversity and difference. In the texts in question, the term diversity is used in connection with positive connotations, with enriching variation and multiplicity, described with words that sound 'nice'. Krell

et al. (2007) explain the meaning of diversity with these synonyms:

> Diversity – respectively in German plurality, diversity, the manifold or similar [...]. (Krell et al., 2007, p. 8; my translation)

Vinz and Schiederig similarly define diversity as more than a mere description of phenomena of difference. Diversity, to them, is a concept with a positive, affirmative character that adds appreciation to description:

> the concept of diversity, exceeding the mere description of heterogeneity and difference, carries a positive connotation of enrichment, of more options and choices, of lively diversity as opposed to the monotony of homogeneity. (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 26; my translation)

The concept of diversity captures differences and similarities (Krell & Sieben, 2010, p.50), that is to say that assessing diversity is not only about the harsh opposites, about that which separates irreconcilably, but also about that which connects people across/through their differences. In accordance with such a dynamic notion of difference, authors describe identities as shifting and multiple (Krell & Sieben, 2010, p. 50; Krell et al., 2007, p. 10).

This notion of a multiplicity of diverse locations is posited in a conceptual conflict or tension with the concept of difference, which here boils down to the hierarchic character of difference. Diversity, in similarity to a "democratic concept of difference" (Krell, 2009, p. 140), is said to be striving to overcome hierarchic difference. Smykalla and Vinz similarly refer to the notion of diversity as striving for a horizontal approach in antidiscrimination politics assuming a "non-hierarchic-diversity" (Smykalla & Vinz, 2011, p. 11). Vinz and Schiederig stress that it is possible and desirable for diversity concepts to

think diversity in such a manner, so that it questions the binary logic of differentiation and opens itself for a multiple understanding of identity (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 31; my translation).

The text examples not only question or problematize a binary logic of differentiation, though. Rather, they tell a story about diversity and difference that identifies the concept of difference with the troublesome hierarchic binary logic of differentiation. Whereas diversity is connected with plurality and an affirmative character of appreciation, difference is generally introduced as synonymous with alterity, with a distance from a normative identity, or with constructions of 'otherness'. Krell et al. accordingly group the concept of difference together with terms that all describe 'otherness':

> Aside of difference, the terms alterity, otherness, foreignness/strangeness (Fremdheit) [...] and similar also are to be mentioned here. (Krell et al., 2007, p. 8; my translation)

Similarly, Vinz and Schiederig introduce the concept of difference as referring to the process of 'othering' and to binary hierarchic classifications embedded in relations of power (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, pp. 29). By way of framing diversity as positive and as valuing differences, and by equating the concept of difference with the negative result of relations of power and 'othering,' the following statement can be made in their text:

> How can diversity be thought, without increasing difference? (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 30; my translation)

This statement carries a message on two levels: on the level of difference and diversity as concepts and approaches to analyze, describe and criticize society as structured through differentiation on the one hand, and on the level of difference and diversity as stand-ins for the actual 'social reality' on the other. While diversity becomes a stand-in for appreciated,

celebrated differences, difference is portrayed as a concept that not only focuses on analyzing the problems caused by hierarchic processes of 'othering,' but simultaneously stands for the 'real' social differences that are hierarchically ordered. The problematic hierarchic character of differences should, according to the quote, not be increased, and should not be called into being, when thinking 'diversity'. The juxtaposition of appreciated diversity with problematic difference connotes the notion of difference with an 'otherness' that causes problems, that crosses the lines of tolerance, and that, perhaps, according to the quoted passage should also not be increased? Reversely, the normative and affirmative approach that the concept of diversity follows comes to 'be' a diverse world of happy multiplicity: what diversity wants to achieve already seems to be assumed as a given by way of using the right concept to look at the world. This dynamic in diversity discourse clearly connects with Ahmed's diagnosis of diversity as a non-performative with regard to diversity politics in higher education. But here it is taken from the context of managing diversity to the level of imagining and analyzing social relations.

The positing of diversity as non-hierarchic-diversity in opposition to difference as only addressing and reifying hierarchic axes of exclusion resonates with the developmental narrative I have described above with regard to gender: diversity is articulated as the more advanced concept for the current tasks in a multiple and flexible globalized world, where in/exclusions seem to happen in a much more complicated way than the old imagination of the binary would allow to grasp. This version of the story about diversity overcoming an older concept, a binary concept of difference, is, again, based on a reductive conceptual identification of difference with one particular very limiting notion of difference. And the identification of difference as only a 'binary-hierarchic difference' is in turn connected with a temporal phase, which is

(necessarily) over: the days of the binary as an explanatory model are numbered.

The proposed appreciation of diversity as the horizontal embrace of all sorts of differences seems infinite and differences seem valuable for no specific reason; they are valuable because they 'are'. Despite the suggested infinity of diversity's inclusiveness, the analyzed texts themselves introduce limits to how far the appreciation and embrace of diversity can go:

> Here [regarding the productive processing of diversity; E.M.] it is always also relevant to ask which degree of difference is *still legitimate* for society, and where and by whom the boundaries are being drawn. (Vinz & Schiederig, 2010, p. 26; my emphasis)

"Unterschiedlichkeit" is being used in this passage, rather than "Vielfalt", therefore I have translated it as "difference" – a move which of course is productive with regard to making my point more plausible. This quote then suggests that diversity, when it becomes difference, can exceed the legitimate range of acceptability in a society. It can seemingly be 'enough' and it can be 'too much to take'. The question in the passage does not seem to be so much about whether boundaries of legitimacy are to be set, but where they are to be set. Thus it is rendered legitimate that there is illegitimate difference, if by degree or kind, that exceeds that which a society can be asked to tolerate.

Instead of buying into the happy tale according to which an appreciative version of diversity has indeed overcome the marking and exclusion of unwanted differences, it seems more plausible that appreciated diversity rests on an implicit (constitutive?) outside: intolerable unwanted differences, non-valued differences, differences that are construed as harmful or unproductive. Davina Cooper (2004) has shown for the context of the UK that the valued forms of diversity emerge against the background of de-valued differences connoted with social harm. Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2006) has argued for the

Norwegian context that appreciated diversity is necessarily accompanied by its 'other': the unwanted differences of those who seem to refuse Western, neoliberal values of tolerance, fragmentation and flexibility. Sara Ahmed (2012) writes about the celebration of 'digestible' diversity that brings about the specter of an indigestible difference as its 'other'. A similar skepticism has been discussed in Germany predominantly with regard to Diversity Management. Diversity Management measures have been criticized for necessarily selecting productive, valuable difference in order to meet their ultima ratio: profitability (Meuser, 2013; Purtschert, 2007). Thus, they cannot prioritize social justice (which may not come as such a great surprise), but only integrate and value certain 'others,' as long as their integration increases the creativity and optimizes the performance of businesses (ibid.).

This suspicion towards an overall inclusive impetus of the language of diversity must be extended and addressed also to a concept of diversity as is suggested for critical research and for diversity strategies beyond the business-case of Diversity Management. The notion of affirmative and appreciative diversity *itself* always already carries the question of value: which differences are welcomed, appreciated and valued in what contexts, to what degree with what effects? What is deemed tolerable, what is 'across the lines,' and who is it that gets to draw the lines? In order to ask these questions it is helpful not to do away with the concept of difference altogether, but to be able to return to the different conceptual levels that can be addressed with it, among which are the questions of (binary and not so binary) hierarchies.

Conclusion

The given analyses show how the stories told in German academic texts affirming (a certain kind of) diversity terminology convince by way of telling a narrative of overcoming that installs diversity as the modernizer of (a certain notion of) gender and difference. De-familiarizing the

common sense mobilized in the plausible stories told in the text examples allows questioning the 'facts' presented as 'facts,' and as the foundation of the arguments given.

With regard to the German context, many questions about the effects of diversity discourse have not yet been asked, much less answered. The analysis offered in this paper suggests that 'saying diversity' beyond the context of diversity politics and equality measurements produces effects, yet not necessarily in the ways it was perhaps intended to. The stories told about diversity are productive and performative in the sense of constituting a field of knowledge about diversity in a particular way. Looking at them as claims and as discursive interventions that speak from somewhere, that "have a country" (Rich, 1985, p. 8), allows contesting their generalizing scope.

The necessary wariness of diversity as a possible, or perhaps even likely, non-performative with regard to institutional equality politics should not invite German critical scholars to overlook the complicated setting in which diversity 'lands,' and the contradictory effects that it produces: imaginations of diversity as well as concepts for a critical analysis of social phenomena matter; they bring about effects, and they make differences. Looking at the performative effects of diversity as proliferative of course also implies that it is on the move, that its meaning can be contested and struggled over, and that other stories can be told. What diversity can 'be' or 'do' in the future cannot yet be said, but, perhaps, it can be co-created in a critical debate characterized by curiosity for contradiction, and in the telling of many different stories.

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